

## **German Literature and Architecture, 1850-2015**

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Architecture is omnipresent in the European and American literatures of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Ever since the publication of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's pamphlet "Von deutscher Baukunst" [On German Architecture] in 1772, modern German literature in particular has been preoccupied with reflecting and responding to the history of building and dwelling. The proliferation of architectural images in German literature often coincides with historical change and upheaval, be it the quest for national identity after the failed German revolution of 1848, colonial aspirations around 1900, rapid urbanization during the Weimar Republic, or the calls for total mobilization in the early 1930s.

Scholars, however, have yet to properly address the productive dialogue between German literature and architecture. Most critics focus their discussions on the interrelatedness of identity, narrative, and space. Moreover, studies of textual representations of interiors, facades, or entire cityscapes are often limited to the use of architecture as metaphor. I propose to pursue a broader agenda by reconstructing the architectural knowledge of modern German literature. Situated at the nexus of literary imagination and socio-political events, my current research project argues that literary texts can be seen as built environments interacting with real-world architecture. Literature serves as a cultural archive, capturing architectural traditions, commenting on contemporary fashions, and projecting visions of how we want to live.

My in-depth study of the architectural context of modern literature follows four distinctive lines of inquiry: First, what happens when a literary text attempts to produce meaning by incorporating architecture? Second, can we surmise a connection between a text's architectural references and its implied political agenda? Third, how are literary representations of architecture related to critiques of modernity? And, finally, how does literature reflect socio-political processes such as gentrification and urban sprawl?